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RUTH

Dramatic Studies

FROM THE BIBLE

BY

Emma Florence Eaton

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1906

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To
L. S.

PREFACE.

This little group of dramatic scenes was written with no thought of publication, but merely for the personal use of Miss Leila Simon in her public readings before churches and colleges. So kindly has been the reception of the studies, and so persistent the wish to have them in permanent form, that it is thought best to publish them.

There is no originality of plot in this series of dramatic studies from the Bible — only an attempt to reproduce a little of the splendid color and atmosphere of ancient Israel, and to picture again some of the vivid, often strangely beautiful, scenes of the Palestine of the past.

E. F. E.

CONTENTS.

PART I.

SOME PICTURES OF THE WOMEN OF ISRAEL.

1. By the River Nile 13–18
2. Ruth: A Pastoral Idyl 21–29
   Scene 1. "Whither thou goest, I will go."
   Scene 2. In the Field of Boaz.
3. A Daughter's Sacrifice 33–38
   Scene 1. The Vow of Jephthah.
   Scene 2. On Mount Gilead.
4. Esther, the Queen 41–51
   Scene 1. Pleading for Her People.
   Scene 2. At the Banquet Table.

PART II.

GLIMPSES OF FOUR GREAT HEBREWS.

1. Scenes in the Life of Joseph 57–76
   Scene 1. Joseph and His Brethren.
   Scene 2. In Pharaoh's Court.
   Scene 3. Before the Governor of Egypt.
2. Moses, the Man of God 79–88
   Scene 1. The Song of Victory.
   Scene 2. The Farewell of Moses.
3. In the Temple of Dagon 91–95
4. The Voice at Midnight 99–101

PART I.

SOME PICTURES OF THE WOMEN OF ISRAEL.

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BY THE RIVER NILE.

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By the River Nile.

IN the dim half-light of early morning a woman stood among the green rushes by the river Nile. A little babe was folded closely to her breast. And there stood near by a young maiden, with dark, eager eyes. And the woman looked back in fear across the meadows toward the temples and shining domes of the great city.

"And thou art sure, Miriam, that no one had knowledge of our coming?"

"Yea, my mother; it was still so early when we crept away that no one marked our flight."

"And, Miriam, hast thou the little ark that I made mine own self from the bulrushes by the river? I cannot see for the tears that blind me."

"Yea, my mother; it is here. I did hide it among the reeds."

And Miriam drew out from the flags by the river's brink the little cradle of bulrushes. And the woman took the babe and kissed it and placed it tenderly in the cradle. And the child opened his eyes and smiled, and the mother stooped down and put both arms about him and again and still again she kissed him. And

Miriam also bent down her head and she laid her face by the face of the child.

"Oh, Miriam, how can I let him go — my beautiful little babe? Who would have dreamed that there could live a king so cruel as to command this wicked thing — to tear her infant sons from every Hebrew mother's breast and slay them! Oh, so surely as the God of Abraham doth live, so surely will the curse descend upon this Egyptian Pharaoh with his heart of stone. And the babe — how can I leave him here alone upon the river? He will die of hunger. And at night he will want my arms to soothe him to his sleep. And yet — I dare not keep him longer. The soldiers of the king already have suspicions. O God, protect my child!"

And the maiden, Miriam, answered her:

"Yea, mother, and I think that God will protect him. Something there is within my heart that tells me. But see, the morning goeth swiftly on. Some one may find us and the babe. Shouldst thou not leave him now? And I — I will tarry here and watch him from afar."

Then they kissed the child once more and hid him in the ark of bulrushes in the tall reeds by the river. And the woman drew her mantle down over her face and went away into the city. And many times she looked back, weeping.

But Miriam sat down under a great palm-tree that she might watch over the child. And as she sat there, she heard a sound of merry laughter. She lifted up her eyes, and lo, there came a company of gay Egyptian damsels unto the edge of the river. And glittering chains of gold and of silver hung about their necks. And splendid gems flashed from their arms and ankles. Flowing silken robes they wore of dark green and of scarlet.

And one of the damsels was more stately and more lovely than the rest, and her raiment was of purple, with a girdle of jeweled gold. She sat down among the flowers on the bank. And she said unto one of her maidens:

"Is all ready, my Renodes, for our bathing in the river? It is well that we came thus early, so beautiful and so radiant is the morning."

And the maiden Renodes answered:

"Yea, dear princess Thermuthis, all is ready and waiting for thy word."

But as she spoke, the princess suddenly cried out and pointed toward the rushes at their feet.

"But, Renodes, and all my maidens, what is this I see? Look yonder where the reeds are thick and green!"

And Renodes ran unto the edge of the bank and she drew forth from its hiding place the little ark of bulrushes and she placed it on the ground

at the feet of the princess, and all the maidens clustered round to look in wonder at the little babe who was lying asleep in the soft, green cradle.

And Thermuthis whispered:

"Gently, gently now, my maidens, and wake him not. For surely from the very heavens he cometh, so fresh and fair and innocent he is. The loveliest thing mine eyes did ever see!"

And Renodes said:

"Forsooth, I believe it is a child of one of the Hebrew women, and in her terror she has hid it here. Thou knowest, dear princess, of the decree sent forth by the king, thy father, that every new-born Hebrew son must die."

But Thermuthis started at her words, and she cried:

"Nay, nay; that shall never be. This Hebrew child is far too beautiful to die. Lo, in this so little space my heart doth yearn toward him. See how long his lashes lie upon his cheek."

And as she spoke the baby stirred in his sleep, and then he opened his eyes. He looked from one to another of the damsels, and then in fear began to cry. And one by one the other maidens tried to charm away his fear. But the strangeness of their faces and their ways but moved him to fresh tears.

And then it was that Miriam, the dark-haired

Hebrew maiden, came near to them. She trembled as she stood there in her little linen robe. But she looked into the eyes of the princess as she said:

"Oh, if it please thee, let me speak. I did hear from afar the crying of the babe and I came to see what the cause might be. And lo, it is a Hebrew child. May it not be that a Hebrew nurse may best know how to still its grief? If thou dost wish, lo, I can find one for thee. For I, too, am of the Hebrews."

And Thermuthis gently held the child within her arms and she answered:

"Yea, it may be that a Hebrew nurse would understand more quickly. And because I truly love this little soft, warm thing that lies against my breast, I must have one to care for him for me. So go, then, my little maid, and return with speed with the Hebrew nurse thou speakest of." And joy danced into Miriam's heart. She ran like a bird into the city and was straightway back again. And the mother of the child was with her. And the babe, when he saw her, held out his arms. And a smile came swiftly to his face.

Then the princess Thermuthis said:

"Lo, a strange thing, that this Hebrew woman hath such instant power to calm the little one!"

She put the child in the woman's arms.

"Wilt thou nurse him for me until the time when he is old enough to live as mine own son at Pharaoh's court?"

And the woman, when she could speak, for the joy that was pulsing through her, answered:

"Yea, thou daughter of the great Egyptian king, I will care for the child as if he were my own. Of this thou mayest be sure."

Then Thermuthis said again:

"It is well. I leave him with thee for a little space. And his name, — lo, I will call his name Moses, since from the water was he saved. And do thou guard him well, for the child has grown dear to me."

Then the princess called her maidens and they went away through the shimmering sunshine, across the green meadows to the palace that was in the city.

And a quiet look of knowledge passed into Miriam's eyes. She said:

"I knew that God would find a way to help us. For always does he hear me when I pray."

And the woman placed her arm about her little daughter Miriam, and then she bowed down her head upon the babe and prayed.

RUTH: A PASTORAL IDYL.

Scene 1. "Whither thou goest, I will go."
Scene 2. In the Field of Boaz.

SCENE I.

"Whither thou goest, I will go."

ON the crest of one of the blue mountains of Moab three women were standing, in sorrow. Below them lay the gloomy waters of the Dead Sea. A white road stretched northward by the margin of the sea toward the Jordan River and distant Palestine.

And two of the women were young and beautiful, with braids of soft, dark hair. And one was older than the others and there were lines of grief upon her face. A heavy black mantle covered her. And she said:

"Hush ye now from your lamenting. Go, return each to thy mother's house, for now have I decided to go back again to mine own people in Bethlehem.

"Long have I tarried in this land of Moab. And sacred is it always for the dear memory of my husband and my two sons.

"And ye, Orpah and Ruth, go back to your people in Moab. And the Lord deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead and with me."

Then she kissed them. And the dark-haired damsel, Ruth, looked upon Naomi with tender

eyes and she said: "Surely we will return with thee unto thy people."

But Naomi folded her mantle about her and she said: "Nay, turn again, my daughters. Why will ye go with me? Turn again, my daughters; go your way. For it grieveth me much, for your sakes, that the hand of the Lord is gone out against me."

And the young women held her to them, in sadness. But it came to pass, at last, that Orpah kissed Naomi, saying:

"Surely it grieveth me to let thee go. For there is no one whom I love more than I love thee. Yet I know that thou speakest words of truth when thou sayest it would be better for me to return to my kindred. For I can do naught to help thee in this new land of Israel. Thy gods are strange to me; thy people may prove unkind. So I will go back unto my home in Moab. Farewell, Naomi, and thou, Ruth, my sister."

And Orpah went down the steep mountain path that led to the valley of Moab. And they watched her white robe until they could see it no more.

Then Naomi turned unto Ruth, who still clung to her, albeit she looked with longing toward the pleasant gardens of her home, and Naomi said:

"Behold, thy sister-in-law is gone back. Return thou after her."

But Ruth answered, "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee!"

Then Naomi placed her arms in tenderness about the dark-haired Ruth.

"But thou knowest not the dangers by the way. Many weary miles stretch out between us here and Bethlehem, where my old home and kindred be. We may grow faint for lack of food. And thou art young and art not used to hardships. I would spare thee grief and needless pain.

"But I am growing old. My hair is gray. I only long to rest me on the hills of my dear village until the end shall come."

And a great weariness fell upon Naomi. In wistfulness she looked into Ruth's dark eyes. And the damsel lifted her face unto Naomi.

"Nay, Naomi, whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God!

"Where thou diest. will I die, and there will I be buried.

"The Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me!"

SCENE II.

In the Field of Boaz.

THE yellow cornfields stretched along the hill slope that was below Bethlehem. Far away in the distance, beyond the Jordan River, loomed in misty outline the high mountains of Moab.

A noonday sun beat hotly down upon a company of merry harvesters, who were reaping and gathering the sheaves together, and singing as they reaped.

Many maidens followed after the reapers, gleaning what had fallen to the ground. They looked like bright flowers in their many-colored garments. But one of the damsels mingled not with the rest. She was very fair of face. Her eyes were dark and her hair was bound by a fillet about her forehead. And she wore a robe of white.

She stopped for a moment to rest. She listened to the harvest song sung by the reapers as they bent up and down with their sickles.

Lo, now the reapers come again.
The fields are ripe with golden grain.
Thou God of harvests, thee we praise,
For thy unceasing care!

The valleys all are crowned with corn!
From tender blade of green was born
The full-grown ear that softly sways
In this sun-lighted air!

We shout for joy! We also sing!
The hills of Bethlehem do ring
With grateful songs! Through all our days
We own God's gracious care!

And now, as the maiden gleaned again after the harvest song was ended, it came to pass that Boaz, the owner of the field, drew near. And he was tall and strong and his face was full of kindness. And he stretched out his hand to the reapers, saying,

"The Lord be with you!"

And the young men answered him in joy,

"The Lord bless thee!"

Then it was that Boaz lifted up his eyes and he saw the damsel who was bending low over the grain that had fallen on the field, and his heart grew warm within him as he saw her grace and beauty. And he said unto him who was at the head of the reapers:

"Whose maiden is this?"

And the servant answered:

"It is Ruth, the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab. And they have not wherewith they may keep from hunger, for they are in exceeding need.

And Ruth came unto me and said: 'I pray thee, let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.' And I did not say her nay. So has she come all these days."

Then Boaz drew near unto Ruth and his voice was very gentle.

"Hearest thou, my daughter? Go not to glean in any other field save this of mine. Neither go from hence, but abide fast by my maidens.

"Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them. Have I not charged the young men that they shall be kind to thee? And when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels and drink of that which the young men have drawn."

Then Ruth was moved by the compassion that was in the face of Boaz, and she fell on her face and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him:

"Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?"

And Boaz answered:

"It hath been fully shown to me all the kindness and all the love that thou hast done unto Naomi since the death of thine husband and how thou hast even left thy father and mother and the land of thy nativity and art

come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore.

"The Lord recompense thy work and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou hast come to trust."

And Ruth said:

"Let me find favor in thy sight, my lord, for that thou hast comforted me and for that thou hast spoken friendly words unto thine handmaid, though I be not like unto one of thine own handmaidens."

And Boaz looked upon Ruth with love in his heart. He took her hand and led her to the spreading olive-trees by the side of the field. And it was meal-time and the reapers were gathered together to eat and to drink.

And Boaz placed Ruth beside him and he said:

"Sit thou here and eat of this bread with me and dip thy morsel in the vinegar."

And he reached her parched corn to eat.

And when she was risen up to glean again, Boaz commanded his young men, saying,

"Let her glean even among the sheaves and reproach her not. And let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave them that she may glean them, and rebuke her not."

And Boaz looked upon Ruth again and he loved her, and he said unto her:

"Farewell, then, for this time, but it shall be that I shall see thee again, for my heart hath truly turned toward thee."

And Ruth was very beautiful as she stood among the sheaves of yellow corn. And she bowed down again and kissed the hem of the long robe that Boaz wore.

"I have not words, my lord, with which to thank thee for thy gentleness. But I pray thy God of Israel, who is now my God also, that thy gracious words have brought unto me such exceeding peace and joy."

And Boaz went away from the field, but as he came unto the green olive-trees by the side of the field, he looked back and saw Ruth still standing where he had left her.

A DAUGHTER'S SACRIFICE.

Scene 1. The Vow of Jephthah.
Scene 2. On Mount Gilead.

SCENE I.

The Vow of Jephthah.

ON the brown uplands of Gilead, a soldier was walking swiftly to the mountain village of Mizpah. His rough camel's-hair dress was bound about his waist by a leathern girdle. He wore the heavy armor of a captain of the host. Fierce, proud eyes and long, coarse hair showed him to be a son of Gilead.

Suddenly he stopped, for a distant sound of music came to him. It grew more distinct, and around the bend of the mountain path, from among the green cedars and lofty oak-trees, there came a throng of Jewish maidens. In robes of white and yellow and scarlet they danced to meet him. Roses and lilies were twined in their dark hair. They danced in time to the music of tabrets and cymbals. They sang:

We come to welcome thee,
O Jephthah, thou mighty man of valor!
From the heights of Mizpah
Have we watched for thy coming.
Lo, even now, are thine armies in the valley below.
We have heard of thy wondrous deeds
That thou hast performed against the armies of Ammon.

Thou hast brought victory to the children of Israel.
And we, the daughters of Gilead,
Cast flowers at thy feet,
And sing praises unto thee!

The stern face of Jephthah softened into pleasure. But, as he looked, there darted out from the midst of the singing damsels a young maiden. Scarcely fifteen years old she seemed. Her robe was of pale blue. About her head was a garland of fresh flowers. She ran in joy to meet Jephthah. "Oh, my father! Jephthah, my father!"

But as Jephthah stooped to take her in his arms, a sudden terror came upon him. He stood as one upon whom some plague has fallen. He rent his clothes and shrieked aloud in agony.

And the merry damsels ceased to dance and to sing. And Mirah, the dark-eyed daughter of Jephthah, trembled in fear.

"Oh, my father, what is it that hath come upon thee? Thou lookest as if thou saw death in the very face!"

Then he took Mirah's face between his two hands.

"Woe is unto me, my daughter; just now I have remembered me of my vow that I vowed unto the Lord. When I went forth to fight against the children of Ammon, lo, I swore this oath to God: 'If thou, O Lord, shalt deliver the

Ammonites into mine hands, then it shall be that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me when I return, lo, that surely shall be the Lord's and I will offer it up for a burnt-offering.' Thus swore I to God; but, alas, I could not know that it would be thou, my best beloved, my only child, that would come forth to meet me!"

He took the maiden in his arms. His tears fell upon her soft hair.

"My daughter, my dear daughter Mirah, canst thou ever forgive me? Can God ever forgive me for my foolish, cruel vow?"

Mirah drew herself from her father's embrace. She passed her hand over her eyes as though she awaked from dreaming.

"Tell it to me again, dear father. I think my ears could not have heard aright. It cannot be that I must die — I, who am so young and glad a maid. Surely it was some jest of thine. It was an idle dream."

"Would to God I had never seen this day! That thou, my only daughter, who art far more than life to me, that thou must shut thine eyes to all this living world!"

For some moments there was no sound save the whispering of the wind in the cedars of the forest and the groaning of Jephthah, captain of the host.

The maidens held each other's hands, for they were sore afraid.

And Mirah's slender body swayed. She would have fallen to the ground had not her damsels run to her and placed her tenderly on the grass.

At last she rose to her feet, unsteadily. She placed her hands upon her forehead. She looked at Jephthah where he lay, his face upon the ground, and she went to him and gently touched him. "Arise, my father."

And Jephthah took the mantle from his head and showed a face drawn and white with anguish.

"I have been weak, my father. I did not understand. I was afraid to die. But now I see more clearly. It seems to me that God will make me brave. And am I not a soldier's daughter? Should not I share my father's spirit?

"And this I know and cannot doubt — your vow to God is holy and surely must be paid."

But Jephthah rent his clothes again and beat his breast in grief.

"It shall not be paid. Never can so fair a lamb as thou be slain upon the altar. Sooner shall I forswear all vows to God in heaven!"

"Nay, dear father, thou shalt keep thy vow. I shall pray to God and he will strengthen my feeble, trembling heart. But grant one boon before thou givest me to God."

Mirah's eyes grew deep. She looked away to the mysterious, purple hills that loomed high above Mizpah.

"Grant this, my father, that I may go away alone, save with my maidens here. Grant that two months may come and go before thou seest my face again.

"And I will wander forth on Gilead's lordly mountains. I will lie at night beneath the jeweled stars that shine in soft, bright splendor. The cattle of the wilderness shall hear my eager prayers.

"The eagles shall bend low to hear me, and my bed shall be among the laughing, tender flowers.

"I shall bathe in the clear mountain brooks and see the sun come forth in golden light when morning dawns. In the shadows of the brooding oaks shall I find rest and comfort.

"And perhaps I shall grow brave and strong and have no fear when the time shall come when I must die."

And Jephthah said: "Thy wish is granted. Go and live among the silences of God until eight weeks have passed. The will of God be done."

SCENE II.

On Mount Gilead.

SEVERAL years later. A grave on a lonely hilltop on Mount Gilead. As evening fell over the trees and mountain flowers, a procession of Jewish maidens moved about the grave.

They chanted slowly:

We come once more,
With quiet steps and slow,
To show
Our love for thee,
Dear Mirah, who didst go
The silent way of death before
Thy time.

We strew thy grave
With flowers fair and sweet,
To greet
Thee now! Thy strange
Sad story we repeat —
Thy sacrifice when thou wast brave
To die!

And it was a custom in Israel that the maidens of Gilead came every year to lament Mirah, the daughter of Jephthah, for she died in her maidenhood, that her father might fulfill his vow to God.

ESTHER, THE QUEEN.

Scene 1. Pleading for Her People.
Scene 2. At the Banquet Table.

SCENE I.

Pleading for Her People.

THE light was dim in the queen's private chamber of the great palace at Shushan. Before a low altar knelt the queen in a robe of black. Her maidens knelt about her, and all were in silent prayer.

At last Queen Esther rose. She put back wearily the dark hair that fell about her face. Shadows were under her eyes. Her face was very white. And the sweet-voiced Sivassah led the queen to a couch that was near at hand.

"O gentle queen, wilt thou not now partake of food? Lo, these three days thou hast fasted, and for many hours knelt here in prayer. Our hearts are wrung with sadness. Can we do naught to ease thy grief?"

"Nay, Sivassah, I know thy love and that of all my maidens. And I thank you all. But how can I be glad of heart when this so fearful fate must come to all the Jews? Thou knowest well the king's decree, that throughout this land of Persia every Jew must die!"

The queen leaned back her head upon the cushions of her couch and closed her eyes. And then she opened them again in sudden terror.

"Oh, Sivassah, almost had I forgotten! To-

night I go before the king as he sits in his audience chamber! And how can I go! Whosoever confronts the king without his bidding goes unto death! And for thirty days I have not known his smile!"

And as Queen Esther was speaking, lo, there was a whispering among her maidens as they stood by the hangings of the door. And through their midst came Hatach, the queen's chamberlain. He bowed low before her.

"Gracious and lovely queen, live forever! There waits without one Mordecai, a Jew, who begs an instant audience with thee."

"Mordecai! Conduct him hither."

And there strode into the rich and softly lighted chamber a gaunt man, with keen, sad eyes. A rough mantle was over his shoulders. His face showed thin and pale.

The queen turned in trembling haste unto her maidens.

"Do ye withdraw for a little space. I would have a private audience with this man."

And her handmaidens went quietly away. Then the queen flung herself down at the feet of Mordecai, crying:

"Oh, how darest thou to come to me? The king hath turned his face from thee in sore displeasure! Prince Haman is still thine enemy. I fear me for thy life!"

But Mordecai stooped down and gently lifted the young queen to her feet. Yet his face was grave.

"Fear not for me, Esther. Of sterner things must we think this day than of my safety. Thou knowest well that through the evil counselings of Haman, the king hath signed and sealed this foul decree to slay all Jews. And I have come lest at the last thou shouldest shrink from doing that which must be done by thee. Didst thou receive my message of several days ago, that thou must plead for all of us before the king?"

"Yea, Mordecai; and I shall try to do thy will, even as in my childhood days when thou wast as a father to me. But thou dost not understand! It is sure death for the one who goes before the king without his word, unless he stretch forth his golden scepter. But I — I am no longer loved by him. If I go, I perish!"

But Mordecai looked at her in silence. Into his eyes came a look of prophecy.

"Yea, I know. It is at the risk of thy life that thou goest to-night before the king. But what is thine own death when the lives of millions of thy people are at stake? Canst thou not see their blood flowing through the streets — old, gray-haired men and little tender babes — all slaughtered in a night!

"I tell thee, Esther, thou art chosen from all the women of thy race to do this glorious deed and save God's chosen people. And if thy weakness overcome thee and thou goest not this night before the king, think not that thou shalt escape! Even though, up to this time, the king knows not that thou, also, art of the Jews, thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed if thou dost falter now!

"And this last word I give thee. When the finger of God is pointing, dare not to turn thy face away! By all the vows that thou hast sworn to the God of Israel, fail us not, or the vengeance of God will be on thee forever!"

And Mordecai was gone.

And the queen called back her maidens to her.

"Smooth ye my hair. And Sivassah, I pray thee, see that my jewels sparkle on me. For I go before the king!"

And they smoothed her long, dark braids, and placed upon her a trailing robe of scarlet velvet. Jewels glistened on her neck and arms. And on her head rested a slender crown of gold.

"Come thou with me, Sivassah, in thy robe of palest green. We two will go alone."

Through the long corridor that led to the audience chamber they hurried. Three times the queen turned back, then went on again.

"Faster, still faster, Sivassah," she whispered, "or my courage faileth!"

She clung to her maiden and she prayed:

"O God, my God, help thou thy child, for I am sore distressed. Let tender pity sink into the heart of the king. And, O God, save thou my people!"

Now they stood by the door of the dazzling, lighted hall. They saw the king sitting in state upon his throne. About him was a brilliant, laughing throng of courtiers. But the words died on the lips of the Persian lords. The king looked up in angry wonder as the young queen walked tremblingly to the foot of the golden throne. Her hands were clasped together. A strange loveliness was on her face and in her deep, pleading eyes.

The king leaned forward from his throne to look upon her. And lo, he looked again. He saw her white face uplifted to him, and her hands stretched out in prayer. And in the silence that was in all the hall, he held forth to Esther the golden scepter.

SCENE II.

At the Banquet Table.

IN the open court of the palace, amid the royal gardens, King Ahasuerus was feasting. The air was fragrant with the perfume of roses and yellow jasmine. Lights glowed softly from golden lamps. All about the court were silken hangings of white and green and blue.

At the king's left hand was Prince Haman, and on his right was Esther, the queen. And she was stately and beautiful, albeit her eyes were sad. But on Haman's face was a look of fear.

The king put down the goblet from his lips and he turned to the queen.

"Now once again I ask of thee thy request, Esther, my queen. It is two days now since thou didst appear all unannounced in the audience chamber. Thou didst not tell me then what was thy wish. Thou didst speak only to summon me and Haman here to dine with thee. And lo, this is the second time that we have come to the banquet at thy bidding. Let thy lips speak as well as thy dark eyes."

And Esther answered: "Yea, my lord the

king, before thou goest this night thou shalt know all. Only wait a little while, I pray thee."

Then she looked toward Haman. "But tell me, Prince Haman, why is it that thy face shows not its wonted calm? Thou lookest as though some startling fear had come to thee."

"It is naught, O queen, — a sudden chill."

But the king smiled as he said: "Ah, yes, my queen, thou doest well to note his restlessness. Ever since he knew this morning of the honor done to Mordecai, he has been as one confronted by some ghastly spectre!"

And Esther leaned forward in eagerness. "But Mordecai — an honor done to Mordecai! What meanest thou?"

"How strangely stirred thou art, my queen! Hadst thou not heard? Last night I found 'twas written in the records of my realm of a plot to kill me — the king! And lo, my chamberlain did learn 'twas Mordecai, the Jew, who showed the plot and saved my life. And when I found that for his faithful service unto me no credit had been shown, I straightway gave command that he should ride upon the king's own horse and royal praise be made to him."

"And has this been truly done to Mordecai, even as thou didst give command?"

"Yea, my queen. And strange it was that when Prince Haman heard of Mordecai's brave

deed and of the honor done him, a sudden rage transformed him.

"But why, dear queen, art thou so moved? Thine eyes have never left my face. And now thou quiverest from head to foot!"

And Esther slipped down from the couch on which she had been lying and she kneeled before the king.

"O mighty king, hear now thou thy queen's request. If any favor I have found before thee ever, hear thou my prayer! This Mordecai, the Jew, is my dear kinsman, for I, thy queen, am also of this hated Jewish race.

"And we are sold, I and my people, to be slain upon the streets.

"If only thou hadst sold us all as bond slaves, I had held my peace. But that our blood should flow — that I and all of us must die, O gracious king, O mighty king, show us thy mercy! Save us from this death!"

For an instant the king said no word. Then he leaped to his feet in anger.

"Who has durst to plan so vile a thing? To slay thyself and all thy people! Some one has wrought deceit upon me. Who is the man?"

"There, O king, he standeth! Because he hated Mordecai — yea, and feared him, too — he wrung from thee this foul decree — to slay the Jews. Thine enemy and mine is Haman!"

The king rose in anger from the banquet table.

And Haman fell down at the feet of Esther. His face was ghastly for the terror that was on him.

"O queen, O gentle queen, forgive me for the wrong I did thee! If thou hast any pity, save me, save me!"

Then still greater wrath came upon the king. He called a chamberlain.

"Cover thou the face of this man here, and carry him to his death. For in my sight he is dead already. And summon Mordecai before me."

And Mordecai was brought into the banquet room. He stood tall and fearless before the king. Then he bowed down to the ground. But King Ahasuerus bade him rise.

"Yea, Mordecai, all is now known to me. Haman, thine enemy, has gone to death. On thee my favor rests.

"But since the decree of the Medes and Persians changeth not, a new decree I make. Thou mayest grant to all the Jews the means of defending them against their foes and thereby foil this evil plot. And thou shalt henceforth rule in Haman's stead and be ever at my right hand. And thou, Esther, my queen, thy prayer is heard!"

And they looked at Esther, who stood before

them in her white silken robe. Exceeding gladness was upon her face. "O great king, I know not how to thank thee! The God of Israel and of Persia forever bless thee!"

And King Ahasuerus answered gently:

"Throughout all Persia, yea, and in far distant lands, shall this thy deed be known. Because even at the risk of thine own life thou pleadest for thy people, there shall great honor fall upon thee always. And as for me, I love thee as I have never loved before, Esther, my queen!"

PART II.

GLIMPSES OF FOUR GREAT HEBREWS.

SCENES IN THE LIFE OF JOSEPH.

Scene 1. Joseph and His Brethren.
Scene 2. In Pharaoh's Court.
Scene 3. Before the Governor of Egypt.

SCENE I.

Joseph and his Brethren.

THE afternoon was passing away into the quietness of early evening. On the grassy fields of Dothan, beneath the shadowy mountains of Gilboa, some shepherds were sitting, watching their sheep. They wore rough mantles of sheepskin. Their staves and leathern scrips lay on the grass beside them. And they were men of stern, dark faces — all save one, whose eyes were kindly.

As they were sitting there, lo, of a sudden, one of the men pointed his finger toward the south.

"Look ye, Simeon and Reuben, and all my brethren, who is he that approacheth from the distance?"

And the other shepherds looked also toward the south. And Reuben, who was older than the rest, and the one whose face was gentle, said at last:

"Now that mine eyes do see more clearly, behold, I know who it is that cometh! It is Joseph, our young brother. Surely he beareth news to us from our aged father, Jacob!"

And, lo, the lad did see the shepherds and ran toward them across the level plain.

But Simeon's eyes blazed anger. He clenched his hands.

"Ah, behold the dreamer cometh! That Joseph whom our father loves as never he loved us! Thou knowest of the coat of many colors that he gave him. I hate him for his simple heart. I hate him for his smiles and for his foolish visions, that point too clearly to the day when he shall rule, a mighty leader, and we, his older brethren, must bow before him! Oh, I could kill the lad!"

And Judah echoed Simeon's words. Exceeding harshness was in his voice.

"Yea, I also gladly would see him dead!"

And then he bent down his head and whispered.

"And now — what hindereth now from killing him?"

He pointed toward the lad, who was still running toward them over the grassy meadows, with eagerness upon his face. They could see now his long tunic, with its woven colors of yellow and red and blue.

But Reuben rose in anger.

"Ye mad men and ye cruel ones, to plot the death of this young, guileless lad! What has he ever done to you of harm? His only crime is that our father loves him!"

But Simeon's face was hard.

"You! You have always stood upon his side and basely bowed your head before him! We'll have none of you. And we will kill the boy! Lo, we will slay him and throw him in the pit near by, and say a wild beast slew him!"

And the others answered, "Yea, we will rid ourselves forever of the dreamer."

But Reuben pleaded with them again. And he said:

"But, at least, let not his blood be on our heads! Why not rather place him in the empty pit and leave him there to perish?"

For in his heart he thought that when the night had brought the darkness, he might creep up and save the boy. And his brethren nodded their assent to Reuben's plan. And Judas said:

"Yea, it were better that his blood be not upon our heads. But he shall surely die!"

And now the lad was come to them. His brown hair hung down along his shoulders. His eyes were bright with joy.

"Oh, now, at last, have I found you all, my brethren! And long has been the journey! For I did not always know the way! I bear you tidings of our father's love and wishes for your welfare!"

But suddenly the lad's voice faltered. He stood still where he was and looked with pain and fear into the shepherds' faces.

"But you — you are not glad to see me. I know not what you mean! Your eyes do burn me as when I told you of my dreams, these many weeks ago. I am afraid!"

And in sorrow Reuben looked at him.

"Fear not, my lad. Fear not."

But Judah said:

"He well may fear. Come, now, we'll have an end of patience. Seize the lad!"

And Simeon and the others laid their hands on Joseph and they stripped him of his long tunic of many colors, and they bound him with cords so that he could not move. And then they lowered him into the deep pit.

And Joseph cried out in his terror,

"Oh, and are there none to show me pity? What have I done to harden so your hearts, my brethren? I have never had a thought ungentle toward you!"

And Simeon said:

"Let us leave him. His words are empty."

But the lad's cries followed them as they left the pit.

And Reuben ran back to the pit.

"Oh, dear lad, I sought to keep them from this crime! But do thou have patience. I still may help thee."

And Reuben went away from the rest into another part of the fields. But the other brethren

sat down to eat. And ever and again came to their ears the piteous crying of their brother Joseph. And Simeon said:

"Shall we never cease to hear him? It were better to kill him with the knife than to hear this wail forever! But look yonder, against the mountains there! Behold, a caravan draws near along the beaten road. Methinks it is a merchant train come here from Gilead and going down to Egypt."

And they watched the long line of white camels, laden with merchandise. Then Judah cried:

"Lo, a sudden thought has come to me! Let us now sell the boy unto these merchant-men! For he is our brother and our flesh. We may not slay him without wrong."

And his brethren were content. And Simeon went unto the pit. He reached down and drew up the boy. And Joseph was trembling with fear and weariness. They loosed his bonds, and carried him unto the merchants.

And Judah said unto them:

"Behold, here is a youth that we would sell to you! Will ye buy him at our hands?"

And the merchants looked upon the lad. His face was white. He could scarcely stand upon his feet. And the chief of the merchants answered:

"Yea, we will take him and sell him in Egypt unto Pharaoh's household. For the lad is comely and of a fair countenance."

And they paid unto Judah and the others twenty shekels of silver. And they took the lad and placed him on one of the camels. And Joseph looked back in sadness. Tears were no longer in his eyes.

"Farewell, my brethren. I think I am no more only a timid lad. Grief and the fear of death have made me understand a little. I never thought you hated me like this. For always I have tried to serve you as a younger brother needs should do.

"And now I go — I know not where! It may be that our father's God will show his face to me in love. No longer seek I mercy at your hands! Some time I think you will be sorry. And may God help you then!"

And the white camels moved away through the darkness.

And, lo, then it was that Reuben returned unto the pit, and he leaned over, saying softly,

"Joseph, Joseph, I have come for thee!"

But no answer came to him. In fear he reached down into the pit. And then he knew that the lad was gone! He rent his clothes and he ran unto his brethren and he cried:

"The child is not! And I — whither shall I go? What shall I tell our father Jacob?"

And Judah and his brethren looked at one another. And Judah said:

"Lo, we have sold him unto merchants who bear him into Egypt. And as for our father Jacob, behold we have dipped the many-colored coat in the blood of a kid, and he will think some evil beast has killed the boy."

And Simeon looked away into the darkness and said to himself:

"Yea, we did sell the lad for twenty shekels — for twenty shekels! But his voice we did not sell! Nor his eyes that still look into mine with sternness. It seems to me that I shall always see that face — always until I die!"

And the others shivered at his words as though a cold wind had touched them, and they turned away their eyes.

SCENE II.

In Pharaoh's Court.

IN Pharaoh's audience hall the lords and courtiers stood in fear. For the great Egyptian king was troubled in his heart. He noticed not the quaking of the black slaves near the throne, nor did he heed the whispering 'mongst the women of the court, nor the wondering face of Asenath, the soft-eyed daughter of the priest of On. He looked with frowning eyes upon five men who stood before him, trembling. They were very old, with withered faces, and white beards falling upon their black velvet robes, and they carried scrolls of parchment in their hands.

And Pharaoh spoke in wrath:

"And do ye dare to say this thing to me — ye who are deemed the wisest of all the magicians in Egypt — that ye cannot interpret to me my dream?"

And the king was angry and very furious, and he said unto the officers of the guard who stood beside him:

"Take forth these wise men and astrologers. Bind them and throw them into prison."

And lo, as they were led forth in haste from the presence of the king, Pharaoh's chief butler

drew near to the high throne. He bowed to the ground before the king, and he said:

"O great Pharaoh, mightiest of all the kings of Egypt, hear now thy servant. For, of a truth, I know of one who can interpret to thee thy dream.

"Once when Pharaoh was wroth with his servants, he did put me in prison — both me and the chief baker. And we dreamed a dream in one night, I and he. And there was with us also in the prison a young man, a Hebrew, who was called Joseph. And we told him, and lo, he interpreted to us our dream. And it came to pass, as he interpreted to us, so it was. Me he restored unto mine office, and him he hanged. And lo, I did forget him even until now!"

Then Pharaoh said in haste,

"Bring this Hebrew from the dungeon."

And the captains of the guard brought Joseph before the king. And he was exceeding thin and white, and he put his hands before his eyes as if to shield them from the light that was in the hall. But even though great weakness was on him, he stood before the king with dignity and peace upon his face. And the Egyptian lords and all the fair women of the court looked upon him and wondered as they looked.

And Pharaoh said:

"I have dreamed a dream, and there is none

that can interpret it. And lo, I have just now heard of thee, that thou canst understand a dream, to show the meaning thereof."

And Joseph looked steadily at Pharaoh as he sat, with troubled eyes, in his royal robes, with the pointed, golden crown upon his head. And he answered:

"It is not in me, O king! But it may be that God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace. Do thou show to me thy dream."

And Pharaoh said: "Lo, this is my dream. Behold, I stood upon the bank of a river. And there came up out of the river seven kine, fat-fleshed and well-favored. And seven other kine came up after them, poor and very ill-favored. And lo, the lean kine did eat up the seven fat kine. So I awoke.

"And I saw in my dream again, and behold, seven ears came up on one stalk, full and good. And behold, seven ears, withered and blasted, sprang up after them. And the thin ears devoured the seven good ears. And lo, I did tell this unto the magicians, but there was none that could declare it to me."

And Joseph stood in silence for a moment. And no one moved or whispered. Then he spoke.

"The dream is one. God hath showed Pharaoh what he is about to do. The seven good

kine are seven years, and the seven good ears are seven years. The dream is one. And the seven thin kine and the seven empty years shall be seven years of famine. This is the thing which I have spoken. What God is about to do he showeth unto Pharaoh.

"Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt. And there shall arise after them seven years of famine. And all the plenty shall be forgotten, for the famine shall consume the land.

"Now, therefore, let Pharaoh look out a man, discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. And let him gather all the food of those good years and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, against the famine that shall be in the land of Egypt. Lo, this is the interpretation of thy dream, O Pharaoh! God hath spoken through me, his servant."

And all who were in the hall were astonished at the wisdom of the Hebrew captive. And the soft-eyed Asenath drew aside her silken veil that she might the better see his face. And Pharaoh's eyes were troubled no longer. He said in joy unto the Egyptian lords who stood at his right hand,

"Where can we find such an one as this is — a man in whom rests the spirit of God?"

And Pharaoh looked upon Joseph standing quietly before the throne. And he said:

"Forasmuch as God hath showed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art. Lo, thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled — only on the throne will I be greater than thou. See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt."

And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand and put it upon Joseph's hand, and he arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and he put a golden chain about his neck.

And Joseph bowed the knee before the king, and he said:

"A wondrous thing is this, that I, a Hebrew slave, should receive such honor at thy hands. The God of my fathers give me strength that I may never fail in faithfulness to thee!"

And Pharaoh looked upon Joseph with exceeding kindness. And he said:

"I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt. And still another honor I show thee now."

And he turned unto the beautiful, dark-haired maidens who were standing there in their flashing jewels and silken robes. And he called unto Asenath, the loveliest of them all. And she came with shyness before the king. Her soft eyes were cast down, and her dark braids hung low over her robe of orange silk. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph:

"Lo, I give to thee for thy wife, Asenath, the daughter of the Priest of On. For thou hast found much favor in my sight."

And Asenath looked up at Joseph with a smile in her eyes. And from that hour Joseph loved Asenath.

And he went out in honor from the presence of the king.

SCENE III.

Before the Governor of Egypt.

JOSEPH, the governor of Egypt, sat upon his gilded chair and looked with impatient eyes toward the marble columns by the door. And as he looked and listened, there came the sound of swiftly running feet, and Aamnah, the steward of Joseph's house, passed through the throng of officers and servants in the hall and bowed the knee before the governor. Dust was on his robe of green embroidered velvet. His breathing showed his haste. And Joseph said,

"And didst thou do my will, Aamnah, my steward?"

"Yea, my lord; I did overtake the Hebrew shepherds, as thou didst bid. And I did accuse them of having stolen thy silver goblet. And lo, it was found with them. I have run back with speed to tell thee. Even now they stand without, in terror."

"Bring them before me."

And eleven men in the raiment of shepherds came with fear into the sculptured hall. Their swarthy faces were burnt by the sun and the wind. And one of them was a slender lad in a dark blue tunic. And he was hardly more than twenty years of age.

And Joseph put sternness into his eyes and into his voice, and he spake unto them through his Hebrew interpreter, for they knew not that the governor of Egypt understood the Hebrew tongue.

"What deed is this that ye have done? Behold, ye came down into Egypt again the second time to buy food, in these years of famine. And lo, I had sent you back again unto your father, Jacob, with much corn in your sacks. Wherefore should ye steal my silver cup?"

And they spake among themselves with frightened faces. And Simeon said unto the others:

"None of us did steal that cup! Some strange mistake did put it in our brother Benjamin's sack. I fear — I know not what — of evil. Somehow, the face of our brother Joseph is before me. O God! shall all my grieving never wash away that sin? For we did see the anguish of our brother's soul when he besought us and we would not hear!"

And Reuben said:

"Spake I not unto you then, saying, 'Do not sin against the child,' and ye would not listen? Behold, his blood is now required!"

But Judah pressed before the others and he said unto the interpreter:

"What shall we say unto my lord? What

shall we speak? And yet I swear unto thee that we be honest men, and stole not thy silver cup."

And Joseph said:

"God forbid that I should make you all my bondmen. But the man in whose hand the cup is, he shall be my servant. And as for the others, go ye in peace unto your father. But who is the man with whom the cup was found?"

And he who was the youngest of them all — whose name was Benjamin — came near. Shame and anguish were in his eyes. He bowed low before the governor, who sat, with unmoved face, in his robes of purple and fine linen, beneath the canopy of yellow silk. And he said:

"O great lord under Pharaoh, behold, it was I with whom the cup was found! But yet — I cannot understand — why it should come within my sack. For surely I did not do this wrong! O great lord, have mercy on me!"

And when Joseph saw the quivering lips of Benjamin, and the beauty of his face, he could not look upon him. And the black-bearded shepherd, Judah, put his arm about the lad to comfort him, and then he kneeled before the governor and said:

"Oh, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears! And let not thine anger burn against me! When we did first come down to Egypt my lord asked, saying, 'Have ye a

father or a brother?' And we said, 'We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age — a little one, and his brother is dead — and he alone is left of his mother Rachel; and his father loveth him.'

"And my lord did say unto us, 'Bring down the lad to me that I may set mine eyes upon him. Except he come down with you, ye shall see my face no more.'

"And it came to pass that when we returned we told our father these things. And he said: 'Ye know that Rachel, my wife, bare me two sons — and Joseph is torn in pieces. And if ye take this lad also and mischief befall him, ye shall bring down my gray hair with sorrow to the grave.' And I, Judah, became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, 'If I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame forever!' Now, therefore, I pray — on my knees I pray — let me abide a bondman, but let the lad go back unto his brethren, unto his father, Jacob! For how can I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me? Lo, I will serve thee all my life if only thou lettest the lad go free!"

And Judah stretched forth his arms unto Joseph, and then he fell down at his feet.

And Joseph could restrain himself no longer. He cried,

"Cause every man to go out from me."

And the stewards of his house and all the servants passed out between the great carved pillars. And Joseph and the Hebrew shepherds were alone. And Joseph covered his face with his hands, and he wept aloud, so that all the Egyptians that were without heard the sound of his weeping. And he stepped down from the high place where he had been sitting and he cried:

"My brethren! Lo, I am Joseph! Doth my father yet live?"

And his brethren could not answer him. But they all fell down to the ground before him. And Joseph said with gentleness:

"Fear not, my brethren. Come near to me, I pray you."

And they rose to their feet and groped toward him like blind men. And Joseph said again:

"I am Joseph, your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt."

And when Simeon heard these words, he rent his clothes and he fell down, crying:

"Ah, yes, my brethren; said I not unto you that full vengeance would come upon us? Both night and day I have not failed to see our brother Joseph's face and hear his cries in all these years since we did act as ravenous beasts toward him. The wrath of God is on us now! Joseph, take thy vengeance. I, of us all, did have the

heart most hard toward thee. Slay me! I deserve it at thy hands."

But Joseph lifted Simeon to his feet. A tender light was in his eyes.

"Nay, Simeon, I did long ago forgive you all. And be not grieved nor angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither. For it was God that sent me here that I might preserve your lives. And he hath made me lord over Pharaoh's house and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt. Haste ye, and go up to my father and bring him down to me. And ye shall all dwell in the land of Goshen and be near unto me. And there will I nourish thee. And, behold, your eyes see and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you. And I did have my silver cup put in Benjamin's sack, and I did treat you harshly, only that I might try your hearts. But now my joy is great, my brethren."

He held out his arms unto Benjamin, and he fell upon the lad's neck and wept. And Joseph kissed Benjamin. And he kissed all his brethren and wept upon them. But when he came to Simeon, lo, Simeon kneeled down before Joseph, and he kissed the sandals of Joseph's feet, and he cried in wonder:

"And dost thou forgive me? Oh, my brother Joseph, know I at last the forgiving love of God himself!"

MOSES, THE MAN OF GOD.

Scene 1. The Song of Victory.
Scene 2. The Farewell.

SCENE I.

The Song of Victory.

A VAST multitude were crowded together along the shore of the Red Sea. High mountains towered behind them, and the blackness of midnight covered them round about. And every man and woman was listening in terror to a distant sound of trampling feet.

And exceeding fear fell upon them all.

"Behold, it is the host of Pharaoh that is following close after us!"

"Yea, and he will drive us back again to our taskmasters in Egypt! Or else he will slay us in the desert here!"

Men shrieked aloud. Women clasped their children in their arms. Sounds of alarm came from the cattle and beasts of burden.

Still nearer and nearer came the tramp of horses' hoofs.

Then from one to another went the cry:

"Moses! Moses! where is he? Let him answer for this now! Because there were no graves in Egypt, did he take us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore hath he dealt thus with us? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should perish here!"

But lo, out of the mad, wild tumult, a sudden silence came. And then a murmur spread from man to man,

"Moses! Moses!"

And a flaming pillar of fire gleamed forth from the darkness and shone upon the waters of the sea. And in the strange, red glow of the cloud of fire a tall man appeared. He stood straight and stately, with a dark robe about him. A long rod was in his hand. In his eyes was a look that thrilled them through. And beside Moses, looking tenderly upon him, stood his queenly sister, Miriam, the prophetess.

And Moses stretched forth his hands over all the weeping, frightened people. And he said:

"Fear ye not! Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will show to you this day. For the Egyptians whom ye have seen, ye shall see them again no more for ever! The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace!"

Then while silence still held the people breathless, Moses lifted his eyes unto heaven, and said:

"O God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, help us in this our need. For we are sore compassed by our enemies, the Egyptians! Even now they are upon us. Save thy people Israel!"

And a voice came unto Moses saying:

"Lift thou up thy rod and stretch out thine

hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I have gotten me honor upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon all his horsemen!"

And when the voice had ceased, the people fell in fear upon the ground. And the pillar of fire went behind them and showed before their eyes the pathless waves of the Red Sea.

And Moses stood upon the shore, and he stretched forth his hands over the sea, and he prayed,

"What thou hast declared, do thou perform, O God!"

And lo, as he spoke, there came a mighty wind out of the east. It swept across the sea, so that a great path showed before them, reaching even unto the other side!

And Moses shouted with a great shout:

"The Lord hath laid bare his holy arm! Come ye across, ye children of Israel! For ye are saved this day!"

And there arose a great tumult. And all the men and women and children fled in haste over the path that was between the waters. And lo, close behind them came Pharaoh's horses, and his brazen chariots, and his host of warriors.

And now, at last, the children of Israel had

reached the further shore. And the host of the Egyptians were shouting in triumph in the very midst of the waves.

And a voice came unto Moses again the second time, saying:

"Stretch out thine hands over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen."

And when Moses saw that the host of the Israelites had passed through the sea, he held forth his hand over the waters.

And behold, as every man and every woman looked back in speechless wonder, there fell upon all the Egyptian army a furious storm of wind and rain! Lightning flashed down from the heavens, and a great earthquake shook the land! And the sea came again to his strength. And the waters returned and covered the glittering horsemen and the splendid chariots — and all the host of Pharaoh was buried in the midst of the sea!

And the Israelites bowed themselves down in awe and worship: "O God the Lord, we fear before thee. Forever will we praise thee!"

And Moses stood in the midst of his people, and a solemn joy was upon his face.

"Let us thank the Lord for this, our great deliverance from our foes. Let us sing unto his holy name!"

And he called together all the musicians, with their cymbals and their cornets and their silver trumpets. And as they came together at his word, lo, Miriam, the sister of Moses, drew near. Her white garments fell even to her feet. Her eyes were strangely deep, so that all men feared before them. Her black hair flowed along her back. And when she spoke, her voice was beautiful as the music of the waves when they glide upon the shores of the Great Sea.

"And we, too, Moses, we who are the women of Israel, we will sing with you before the Lord, to praise him for his wondrous works!"

And then the women loosened their dark hair. They gathered their robes about them, and they took their timbrels in their hands, and they danced and sang,

"Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously;
The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea!"

And the musicians answered them and they sang together the song of Moses:

"The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation:
He is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation.
Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea:
His chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea.
Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power:

Thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy.
Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods?
Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?
The Lord shall reign for ever and ever!"

And then Miriam and the other women danced again and sang,

"Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously;
The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea!"

And when the song was finished, lo, the darkness passed away, and the sun came forth, and shone down in splendor upon the throng of men and women and little wondering children who kneeled in praise by the shores of the restless sea. And the queenly Miriam drew near once more unto her brother Moses, and with joy he looked into her deep eyes, — and then he held forth his hand in blessing over all the kneeling people.

SCENE II.

The Farewell of Moses.

THE morning sunshine was bathing in yellow light the green valley of Moab. It fell softly upon the rocky sides of Mount Nebo, rising steep and gray above the plain. Thousands of white tents glistening among the palm-trees marked the encampment of the Israelites. On the left rolled down the sparkling Jordan River to meet the waters of the Dead Sea. Across the flowery meadows some distance to the south the Arnon flowed, while around and above were the pine-covered mountains of Abarim.

Stretched along the soft grass at the foot of Mount Nebo was a great multitude of men and women looking reverently into the face of a man, old, white-haired, yet still erect and majestic,—Moses, who had led his people through the burning desert for nearly forty years. To-day his wanderings were at an end. He had gathered Israel together for the last time. In silence they listened as slowly came the grand words of his oration:

"And now, O Israel, hearken unto the statutes and unto the judgments which I teach you, for

to do them, that ye may live and go in and possess the land which the Lord, the God of your fathers, giveth you.

" For what great nation is there that hath a god so nigh unto them as the Lord our God is, whenever we call upon him?

" Only take heed to thyself lest thou forget the things thine eyes saw, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life. Know therefore this day and lay it to thine heart that the Lord he is God in heaven above and upon the earth beneath. There is none else."

Hour after hour these men of Israel sat under the cloudless skies and listened while Moses spoke of the land beyond the Jordan which they were to possess, — all the glowing country of stately rivers and fair meadows, — the promised land, flowing with milk and honey. But he who had led his people to the borderland could not enter. For him the gates were shut.

And now of a sudden the theme of his oration changed. The patriarch burst into an exalted song.

" Give ear, ye heavens, and I will speak;
And let the earth hear the words of my song!

" My speech shall distil as the dew;
As the small rain upon the tender grass.

" For I will proclaim the name of the Lord:
Ascribe ye greatness unto our God."

Then at last the solemn address was ended. The people waited while the man of God walked slowly through their midst. The heads of the tribes pressed near to receive his sacred benediction.

"Peace be unto thee and thy little ones forever," and he gently placed his hands upon their heads. Then stretching forth his arms above them all, he said,

> "There is none like unto God,
> Who rideth upon the heaven for thy help,
> And in his excellency on the skies.
> The eternal God is thy dwelling place,
> And underneath are the everlasting arms."

The blue shadows lengthened on the mountains of Abarim. The red sun began to sink down beyond the Jordan. Moses lifted up his hands in his last prayer:

"Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.
Before the mountains were brought forth,
Or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world,
Even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.
For a thousand years in thy sight
Are but as yesterday when it is past,
And as a watch in the night.
Let thy work appear unto thy servants,
And thy glory upon their children.
And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us."

Deeper grew the shadows. In reverence they watched their leader as he gathered his long robe about him and in quiet calm left the valley. All alone he ascended Mount Nebo. From rock to rock he climbed until he reached the lofty summit of Pisgah.

All Canaan lay before him — the land he might see with his eyes but never enter.

Beneath his feet the land of Gilead stretched away to the far north. He could see in the dim distance the snowy peaks of Lebanon. On one side the wide plains of Moab faded away into the barren wastes of the Egyptian desert, while across the fertile fields and tossing corn of Judah his eyes rested at last upon the blue waters of the Great Sea.

Long he stood there, looking wistfully into the distance. At length he turned away from the loveliness of Canaan and entered upon his lonely, mystic journey. For there, under the evening skies of Moab, on the bare summit of the silent mountain, this man, who had seen God face to face, was borne away into the unseen world, and no one knew when it was that God took him, and no one saw his grave.

IN THE TEMPLE OF DAGON.

In the Temple of Dagon.

THE sacrificing and revelry in the great temple of Dagon suddenly ceased. The worshippers rose to their feet as a long procession swept into the amphitheater and took its place before the great golden statue of Dagon, the Fish God.

But the people paid scant attention to the scarlet-robed musicians who led the way with their fifes and clanging cymbals; nor to the glittering line of archers and bowmen and mighty men of war. Every eye was upon the central figure of the procession — a man of huge stature, in a ragged tunic, with bare, bleeding feet. Fetters of brass bound his arms. His head, covered by a mass of long, unkempt hair, was bowed upon his breast, while great cavernous eyes that saw nothing stared out from under shaggy brows. Again and again the people shouted,

"It is the blind Samson, the fallen hero of Israel!

"Forsooth he has come to furnish us good sport on this, our festive day!"

While the captive stood silent in the midst of his guard, a hymn of victory reverberated through the temple, sung by a chorus of a hundred voices.

"Praise be unto Dagon, our God, who hath given us the victory!
The standard of Israel hath been brought low, it hath been trampled in the dust.
Praise be unto Dagon that the mighty Samson, the prince of Israel, hath been abased.
No longer doth the host of the Philistines tremble before the arms of their enemies.
Shame hath come upon Samson. Shame hath come upon Jehovah, the God of Israel! Dagon is the true god, and we worship before him!"

The chief lord of the city drew near to Samson. "We have sent for thee, thou dog of an Israelite, because our hearts are merry within us this day. We have sent that thou mayest show before us thy boasted feats of skill."

And Samson answered:

"Thou knowest well that thou mayest do with me what thou wilt. I am but a wretched prisoner in thy hands, to grind thy meal if thou dost command, or to be a jest unto thee and thy fellows. My once proud spirit is broken!"

Now the arena was made ready. The bonds of brass were removed from Samson and he was led near to the high pillars that supported the flat roof on which were sitting three thousand Philistine nobles in their holiday raiment of bright-colored tunics and embroidered robes. One task after another was imposed upon the captive. Since his strength was still beyond

that of any other man, he brake with ease iron cables, he lifted great weights, he carried on his shoulder a towering bullock. Still the people, mad with excitement, demanded more and more.

At last Samson turned to the little lad who was his guide: "Lead me, I pray thee, child, closer to the great pillars that are beneath the roof, that I may rest me there, for I am over weary."

And the boy led him to the pillars.

And it came to pass that a strange, new look came upon the face of Samson. His head no longer hung in shame upon his breast. He stood straight in his place and he put forth his hand and caused silence to come to all the Philistines.

Then he spake: "Ye Philistines, hear now the words that I utter. I have come here at your command, and ye will bear witness that I have obeyed you well. I have made laughter for you and for your women and children. I have borne with patience the scorn and insults that ye have sent upon me like poisonous javelins, for I am your captive.

"Ah, too well I know that I have deserved that which has come, for I held in light esteem the sacred gift of the Most High — I who might have redeemed my people Israel!

"But I have drunk to the dregs the cup of bitter sorrow. You have taken full punishment

upon me. With your red-hot coals you have put out my eyes, so that never again may I look upon the glad sunshine nor the green grass of the meadows nor the blue sky over my head. I have ground your meal for you. I have done the most degrading labor. No disgrace has been too mean for me, no insult too debasing. And now I ask of you, ye Philistine lords, one favor. Let me who have done all things at your will, show one thing of myself."

"What is it that the slave purposes in his heart?" said the chief lord of the city to him who sat at his side. "Shall we grant his request?"

"Yea, for he can do naught, blind as he is. Let us see what the fool will do!"

"Go thou on, then, Samson, thou beast of a race of beasts! We wait to see thy sport."

Then Samson turned his sightless eyes toward the heavens and he prayed, "O thou everlasting God, hear me as I make this prayer! Lord, thou hast known me from the beginning. Thou gavest me the glorious power by which I slew the lions and brake in pieces thine enemies. Yea, even by the thousands lay they in the plains of Lehi. Thou anointedst me as judge over thy people Israel, and I exulted in my strength. O most high God, thou knowest that I kept not the great gift intrusted unto me. I

treasured it not as a sacred thing; I betrayed it into the hands of a wicked Philistine woman.

"Yet I make this last prayer. Grant that the strength that has come back with the growth of my hair may be fully shown this day. O God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, strengthen thou the sinews of my arms! Grant that thy might and thy glory may be made manifest unto all the world, and that this day thy favor may fall again upon thy chosen people Israel!"

Then Samson took hold of the two great marble pillars that were under the vast roof on which sat the thousands of feasting, taunting Philistines. And power thrilled into him, and still more power. He grasped the mighty columns, and pulled with a strength beyond mortal strength. And lo, the pillars of the temple were torn asunder! And the great roof fell down upon all the Philistines with a thunderous crash like the roaring of a tumultuous sea!

THE VOICE AT MIDNIGHT.

The Voice at Midnight.

NIGHT had fallen upon the quiet plains of Shiloh. The green orchards lay in peace, and the vineyards, fragrant with purple grapes, and the silver brook that wound in and out through the fertile meadows.

On the west the dark mountains of Ephraim lifted up their heads unto the sky, while far away to the south towered the watchful guardians of the valley — Mount Moriah and Mount Zion.

In the midst of these silent vineyards was the sacred tabernacle of the children of Israel. Night was come there also. Eli, the aged high priest, and all the other servants of the temple, had lain down to sleep. There was no light save that a faint shining came from the golden candlestick that was in the holy place.

In a little chamber close beside the veil of blue and purple and scarlet that hung before the holy of holies, a child was lying. It was Samuel, whose charge it was to open the outer door of the tabernacle when the sun rose in the morning, to care for the seven-branched candlestick, and to do all the will of Eli.

And it came to pass when midnight was upon all the temple that the Lord appeared. In a still voice he called, "Samuel! Samuel!" and

the child answered, "Here am I!" for he supposed that Eli had need of him.

And he leaped from his couch and ran unto Eli, saying, "Here am I, for thou calledst me."

And the old priest said, "I called not; lie down again."

And he went and lay down.

And the Lord called yet again, "Samuel! Samuel!"

Then the child arose and went to Eli and said, "Here am I, for thou didst call me."

But Eli answered, "I called not, my son; lie down again."

But the Lord called again the third time, "Samuel! Samuel!" And the child arose and went to Eli and said, "Here am I, for thou didst call me."

And Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child. Therefore he said unto Samuel, "Go lie down and it shall be if he call thee again that thou shalt say, 'Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.'"

So Samuel went and lay down in his place and waited to see if the mysterious voice would come again. The richly-woven curtains of the temple trembled at the stirrings of the night breezes. The air was still heavy with the incense from off the altar.

And in the hush and darkness the Lord came

and stood and called as at other times in the same still voice, "Samuel! Samuel!"

And the heart of the child became filled with the knowledge of the glory of God. A brightness came from between the cherubim on the mercy seat that was within the sanctuary and shone all about him. His face glowed with light.

In that hour Samuel knew the Lord, and he kneeled down and prayed, saying, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth!"

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